

*A Brief Account of the Most Remarkable PRODIGES which happened at the Birth, in the Life, and at the Death of our Blessed Saviour JESUS CHRIST.*

*To which is Added, A Lively Description of the Person of Christ.*

Also, Something concerning AGBARUS, Prince of the Edessians; with his Epistle to Christ; and Christ's Letter in Answer thereto. Collected out of the Best Historians, both Divine and Heathen. And illustrated with Observations, both in Verse and Prose. By W. L.

In the Days of Tiberius Caesar the Emperor, Publius Lentulus being at that time President in Judea, wrote an Epistle to the Senate of Rome, Concerning Jesus Christ, the Words whereof are these, as followeth,

Here appeared in these our days, a Man of Great Virtue, called JESUS CHRIST, who is yet living amongst us, and of the People is accepted for a Prophet, but his own Disciples call him the SON of GOD. He raiseth the Dead, and cureth all manner of Diseases.

Well might the Romans at such Works admire: For he and his God, could ne're so high aspire. Those Mighty Works he did, declar'd him more Than all those Idols Rome did then adore: The Dead reviv'd; Who could their Life restore, But he that first inspir'd it by his power? How could the Blind in darkness longer stray, When th' glorious Sun dispos'd it quite away? And what but Health could seize all Living Things, When shadow'd under his All-healing Wings?

He is a Man of stature somewhat Tall and Comely, with a very reverend Countenance, such as the beholders may both Love and Fear, his Hair of the colour of a Chestnut full ripe, and plain almost down to his Ears, but from the Ears downward somewhat curled, and more orient of colour waving about his Shoulders. In the midst of his Head goeth a seam or partition of his Hair after the manner of the Nazare-

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rites; his Forehead very plain and smooth; his Face without spot or wrinkle, beautified with a comely red; his Nose and Mouth so formed as nothing can be reprehended; his Beard somewhat thick, agreeable in colour to the Hair of his Head; not any great length, but forked in the midst; of an Innocent Look; his Eyes gray, clear, and quick.

In reproofing he is severe, in admonishing courteous, and fair-spoken, pleasant in Speech, mixed with gravity. It cannot be remembered that any have seen him laugh, but many have seen him weep: In proportion of Body well shaped and straight, his Hands and Arms very delectable to behold; in Speaking, very temperate, modest, and wise.

A Man for his singular Beauty surpassing the Children of Men.

When all that's Good, most Perfect, and Divine, To dignify our Nature did combine; When Innocence descended from Above, In brightest Glory and in purest Love; What else but Beauty could it self display, Far more illustrious than the clearest Day, And much more during: That one frowning blast, At night approaching, makes to look again, But this, unscathed by devouring Age, Unruffled by tempestuous Heat, an Age Consummation of a perfect Symmetry And will endure boundless Eternity.

So Heaven's bright Nuntio's did of old descend In Fiery Clouds, not able to contend With Phobus, till this most refulgent Cloud Chang'd Night to Day: Dim Sol amazed stood, Trembling for fear a far more Radiant Light Should him obscure, and make him rule the Night.

*PRODIGES in the Life of Christ.*

I Now proceed to speak of Prodiges which occur'd in the Life of our blessed Saviour here upon Earth. Saint Jerome relates, That when Joseph fled with the Virgin and her Son into Egypt, all the Idols and Images of their Gods tumbled from their Altars to the Ground; and that their Oracles also ceased at that time, and never were heard to answer any more: (Rarities of the Creation, pag. 84.) About the first Year after the Birth of Christ, Armies were seen at Rome fighting in the Air. The Sun suffered a violent Eclipse, after which a violent Tempest of Rain and Hail followed. And about the 12th Year, when Jesus disputed with the Jewish Doctors, a great and terrible Comet appeared. The Light of the Sun was apparently seen to fail at Rome.

How could he longer cast a glimmering Ray, And see the Fountain of his Light decay?

The Heavens seemed to burn. Fiery Beams fell from Heaven, and bloody Comets were seen in several places. The River Tiber overflowed Rome: Upon which see Horace in the 2d. Ode of the first Book, Jam satis terræ nivis, &c. Thirteen Cities in Africa were destroyed by an Earthquake. Noisome and Pestilential Flies came in great Swarms into Germany. Caligula that Monster of Mankind was born. King Agrippa was slain. Augustus Caesar dyed. In the 22d. Year of his Age it rained Blood in Rome, which was a remarkable preface of the effusion of Christ's most precious Blood. Armies were seen again fighting in the Air, both in Rome and Poland; and a Blazing Star like a Sword was discerned in the Skye: Soon after which the Theatre erected by Pompey, was burnt down, and the City of Tiberius drowned. And in the same Year Tiberius became a most Bloody Tyrant, and committed all manner of Cruelty upon the Romans.

Strange and Unusual Sight, what else could be, While our Great Lord sustain'd such Misery: Nature unshook, stood trembling in amaze, Dreading her Master would her Beauty raise; Least she to her Confusion should return, And Fiery Flames become her Funeral Urn. Such strange Events may justly seem to bode, A Wicked People, and an Angry God.

*PRODIGES at the Death of Christ.*

In the 34th Year of our Saviour's Life, Tiberius then being Emperor of Rome, the Wicked Jews most barbarously crucified our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as produced such prodigious Effects, as were never seen in any Age before, and which were afterwards attested and confirmed as well by Heathens as Christians.

At the time of his Death, a very great and thick Darkness happened in the Day-time, which continued from Six till Nine, and yet the Sun suffered no Eclipse, for the Moon was at Full, so that it was Miraculous, and Contrary to the Order of Nature, and could be no otherwise effected than by the Immediate Power of God, who justly deprived the Sun of its Light, whilst his Son ignominiously suffered Death for the Sin of Man: Dionysius the Areopagite being that Day in Athens, and seeing the Son in a total Eclipse, and knowing (being well skill'd in Astrology, and the Course of the Heavens) that such an Eclipse must be contrary to the known rules of Nature, cryed out with a loud Voice, Either the World is at End, or the God of Nature suffers. Some Authors affirm, that the Wise Men of Athens were so much affrighted at this Prodigy, that they presently caused an Altar to be built, and dedicated to the unknown God: and that St. Paul arriving there, checked their blind and superstitious Ignorance, declaring unto them, That Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the World was that unknown God, whereby he converted many of them to the Christian Faith. Which also is a plain demonstration that the Darkness was over the whole World, since it was at Athens, and other places far remote from Jerusalem; yea, the Moon being at Full, and having no Light but what she borroweth from the Sun, she became most violently darkened.

Heaven's brightest Darling thus bereav'd of Light, What could succeed but a most gloomy Night? Darkness his Mourning cloth'd the doleful Skye, And thickest Clouds became his Canopy: All things condele, but the most impious Jew, Who did his Hands in Spotless Blood imbue.

I might mention a great many more Prodiges, which I have met with in credible Authors, but am forced at present to omit them for brevity's sake; desiring that these, represented unto us in this small Collection, may have that blessed effect upon every one of us, to make us more circumspect in our ways. And if such Terrible Apparitions happened at his First Coming, far more Dreadful may be expected at his Second: For which God of his infinite Mercy prepare us all; Amen.

FINIS.

After that Jesus Christ was made manifest unto all men through the working of Miracles, he drew unto him an innumerable sort of Strangers, far distant from Judea, (afflicted with sundry Diseases, and every sort of Maladies, being to recover their health;) of which King Agbarus Governour of the famous Nations inhabiting beyond the River Euphrates, grievously diseased in body, incurable by mans cunning, hearing the renowned Fame of Jesus, the wonderful Works which he wrought, agreeable to the same, published of all men, wrote unto him by Letters, requiring deliverance from his Disease; Jesus (though not presently) yielded unto his desire, vouchsafed to answer him by an Epistle, That shortly he would send one of his Disciples, which should cure his Disease; promising withal, That he should not only cure his Disease, but as many as belonged unto him. Which promise he not long after performed, for after his Resurrection, Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles, sent his Brother Thaddæus, accounted among the seventy Disciples, by Divine Inspiration, into the City of Edessa, to be Preacher of the Doctrine of Christ, by whom all things concerning the Promise of Christ were performed.

The Reader hath an approved Testimony of these Things in Writing, taken out of the Recorded Monuments of the Princely City Edessa; for there are found enrol'd in their publick Registry things of Antiquity, and which were done about Agbarus's time, and preserved unto this Day, and copied out of their Registry, and translated by us out of the Syriac Tongue in this manner.

*The EPISTLE of Agbarus unto our Saviour.*

Agbarus, Governour of Edessa unto Jesus the good Saviour, shewing himself in Jerusalem, sendeth greeting; I have heard of thee, and thy Cures which thou hast done without Medicine or Herbs; for (as the report goeth) thou makest the Blind to see; the Lame to go; the Lepers thou cleansest; foul Spirits and Devils thou castest out; and the long diseased thou restorest to Health; and raisest the Dead to Life. When that I heard these things of thee, I imagined with myself, one of these two things, either that thou art God come from Heaven, and dost these things, or the Son of God that bringeth these things to pass. Wherefore by these my Letters, I beseech thee to take the pains to come unto me, and that thou wilt cure this my grievous Malady, wherewith I am sore vexed. I have heard moreover that the Jews murmur against thee, and go about to mischief thee; I have here a little City, and an honest, which will suffice us both.

*The LETTER of Christ to Agbarus.*

Agbarus, blessed art thou, because thou hast believed in me, when thou sawest me not; for it is written of me, That they which see me shall not believe in me, that they which see me not, may believe and be saved. Concerning that thou writ'st unto me, that I should come unto thee; I let thee understand, that all things touching my Message are here to be fulfilled; and after the fulfilling thereof, I am to return again unto him that sent me. But after my Ascension, I will send one of my Disciples unto thee, which shall cure thy Malady, and restore Life to thee, and them that be with thee.

*PRODIGES at the Birth of Christ.*

In prosecution of my intended method, I first begin with the Birth of the most pure and immaculate Son of God, incarnate, which was (according to the best of Chronologers) in the 3849 Year of the World, and in the 48th Year of Augustus Caesar, second Emperor of Rome, it was attended with many surprizing and remarkable Prodiges and Apparitions in the Heavens, and that after a more Terrible and supernatural manner than ever happened in the preceding Ages, as the learned and warlike Jew Josephus testifies in his Jewish History; which Sights being unusual, were therefore more Frightful to humane Nature, and put the Magi themselves (to whom the Vulgar had ever recourse in things of Consequence) to so great a non-plus, that they could make no evasion, but were forced to conclude (as well they might) That some more than ordinary Person should arise. For besides the Account given by the Evangelists, of an Angel appearing to the Shepherds, and the Star which directed the Wise Men to the Place of his Nativity, we have it recorded by Paulus Horatius, and Eutropius, then Secretaries to Augustus, as also by Eusebius, (a very credible Author) That a Fountain of pure Oyl was discovered in a publick Inn at Rome, issuing forth without intermission for the space of a whole Day. Which was a very notable Instance of the Coming of Him who was the Fountain of all Goodness. And they farther add, That at high Noon, on a clear and serene Day, the visible Body of the Sun was environed with a Circle far more resplendent than it self.

Bright Sol surrounded with that Glorious Light, Withdrew his Beams, and vanish out of sight: The Righteous Son made that illustrious Day, Darkn'd at his arising fled away; Misted in th' Night of blind Obscurity, Before we grop'd, but now we plainly see.

Gamester in his Ecclesiastical History, affirms, That the very same Day that our Saviour Christ was born, a Temple at Rome, dedicated to the Goddess Pax, fell to the Ground; adding, that when it was first erected, the Romans consulted the Oracle of Apollo, demanding how long it should continue, which replied, Until a Virgin should bring forth a Child: Which they concluded impossible; and therefore that Temple should never be demolished; nevertheless they were grossly mistaken, for at the blessed Virgin's bringing forth a Child (even the King of Heaven) it fell to the Earth, and became a ruinous heap. Lucas de Cais in his Chronicle of Spain, reports, That he found in the Antient Records of that Country, that by computation of Time, on the same Night wherein our Saviour was born, a Cloud appeared about Midnight, giving such a resplendent Light, that it was hard to distinguish the Night from a clear Day.